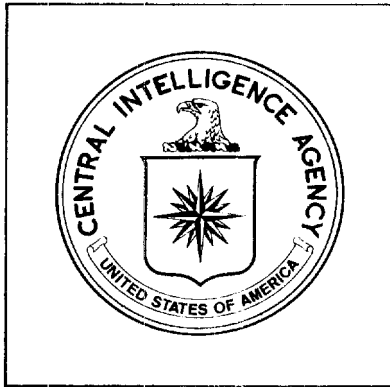


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This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the USSR - Eastern Europe Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

CONTENTS

January 8, 1975

Soviets Say Brezhnev Is Back.	1
No Change Evident in Soviet Emigration Policy.	3
Polish Party Plenum	4
Central African Republic Receives Soviet Military Aid.	5

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Soviets Say Brezhnev Is Back

In an effort to counter Western speculation about political instability in the Kremlin, Tass yesterday denounced such stories as "fabrications" by "slanderers" and "palm readers." The Tass article was the first public comment on the subject by Soviet authorities. It said that the Soviet people and party are united and "fully support and trust their leadership, the party, and its Central Committee."

The Tass blast at Western speculation, which was touched off by the General Secretary's absence from public view since December 24 and the cancellation of his trip to the Middle East, was ostensibly directed at the French daily *Le Monde*, although clearly a wider audience was intended.

The Tass statement did not specifically address the question of Brezhnev's health, but in a report earlier yesterday Tass said that Brezhnev and his family had attended the lying-in-state of his mother who died on January 7. The report did not mention Brezhnev's presence at the subsequent burial, but a Tass spokesman later told Western newsmen that Brezhnev was there. His limousine, with drawn curtains, was seen at the cemetery by Western observers.

The published obituary for Brezhnev's mother and condolences were signed by the entire leadership. The same was true when Premier Kosygin's wife died in 1967.

Whatever the present state of Brezhnev's health, there have been some other reports of his activity. The US embassy in Moscow has learned that a Soviet

January 8, 1975

SECRET

SECRET

Foreign Ministry official informed the Italian embassy on January 6 that Brezhnev had resumed his normal work schedule. French and West German diplomats have reported during the last few days that Brezhnev's car was leaving the building where he maintains an apartment at the regular morning hour and traveling toward the Kremlin. (CONFIDENTIAL)

25X1A

January 8, 1975

-2-

SECRET

SECRET

No Change Evident in
Soviet Emigration Policy

Enactment of the US trade reform bill has as yet had no perceptible effect on Soviet emigration policy. According to sources active in the Moscow Jewish community, there has been little change in Soviet handling of emigration applications since a compromise on the issue was announced in Washington last October.

The sources discount the significance of those few well-known activists such as Aleksandr Voronel and Viktor Polsky who have recently been allowed to emigrate. Other applicants, especially scientists, have been denied permission to leave before specific dates, some not until 1980. The sources believe, however, that the Soviets see no advantage in holding dissatisfied activists forever, and may eventually let most trickle out, one by one.

There is no sign that the overall pace of emigration has changed from the nearly 2,000 per month that was maintained in 1974. Late in the year the Soviets stepped up propaganda designed to emphasize the problems faced by previous emigrants and thereby discourage potential applicants. Since mid-December they have vehemently denied that any agreement exists with the US to permit a higher level of emigration in return for most-favored-nation status in the US trade bill. (CONFIDENTIAL NO FOREIGN DISSEM/BACKGROUND USE ONLY)

25X1A

January 8, 1975

SECRET

SECRET

Polish Party Plenum

The Polish party Central Committee held its 16th plenary session on January 6 and 7 to discuss the "ideological, political, and organizational strengthening of the party." Although only a summary version of Gierek's closing address is available, it does not appear that the party leadership is seriously concerned about ideological or organizational deficiencies.

Gierek appeared pleased with past socio-economic developments and said that it is the party's "supreme duty" to maintain such progress. As usual, he called on party members to continue their leading role in the economy. He apparently, however, made only passing remarks on the need to develop ideological work. This may indicate that other speakers had more to say on this subject. It seems unlikely, however, that any of the speakers adopted the strident tones used last spring.

Instead, the plenum participants probably concentrated on the coming party card exchange and assessments of the election and evaluation sessions that have been held in the local party organizations. In the next few months, the district and provincial party organizations will also hold similar meetings. The plenum confirmed that the party's seventh congress will meet in the last quarter of 1975. (CONFIDENTIAL)

25X1A

January 8, 1975

SECRET

SECRET

Central African Republic Receives
Soviet Military Aid

The Central African Republic is the newest recipient of Soviet military aid. A Soviet transport aircraft reportedly arrived in CAR in October with some military equipment. In early November shipments of Soviet military equipment arrived in Douala, Cameroon, and Brazzaville, Congo, for transshipment by barge to CAR. Deliveries so far have consisted of small arms, ammunition, trucks, and four armored cars. Unloading is believed to have been supervised by three Soviet military advisers.

These shipments are probably the result of an agreement reached during a visit to Moscow last spring by the CAR's deputy minister of defense. At the time he was reportedly trying to solicit a long-term credit for the purchase of arms and training of CAR personnel in the USSR.

Soviet-CAR relations have been on a gradual upswing over the past several years despite occasional differences. In addition to the delivery of arms, Moscow is continuing various other aid projects and recently renewed its agreement for scientific, technical, and cultural cooperation. The CAR has traditionally relied on France for military equipment. (SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM)

25X1A

January 8, 1975

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